Re: 'Rural Health Care Pilot Program': WC Docket No. 02-60

Kevin J. Martin Chairman Federal Communications Commission 445 12th Street, SW Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Mr. Martin:

This is a letter of support for Franklin Community Health Network's Rural Western and Central Maine Broadband Initiative.

As Executive Director of the nonprofit Rural Broadband Initiative and as an appointee to the governor's Broadband Access Infrastructure Board (BAIB), I am all too familiar with the frustration facing individuals, businesses, social service agencies, and healthcare providers in our area who cannot purchase high-speed data connectivity at any reasonable price, no matter how badly they want it or how much their works suffers in its absence.

President Bush has stated the goal of "universal, affordable access for broadband technology by the year 2007." If we are to have any chance of meeting the President's challenge, then the Rural Western and Central Maine Broadband Initiative will need to be funded fully and urgently.

We have waited more than a decade for ordinary market forces to expand the availability of high-speed Internet access in our region, and it simply hasn't happened. But at the same time, a 2004 survey of high-speed Internet usage in Farmington and Wilton by the Rural Broadband Initiative revealed overwhelming support for expanded broadband Internet access; an astounding 94% of respondents indicated they would subscribe to high-speed Internet if made available in the next year.

I have long been an advocate for a robust high-speed Internet infrastructure in this region, motivated by the belief that high-speed Internet access is a key strategic resource for rural communities. Rural areas benefit dramatically from the resources provided by high-speed Internet by supporting multiple positive effects on the region's economy, culture, education, and tourism, and enabling communities to become more competitive in areas of manufacturing, commerce, job creation, and employee recruitment and retention. Increased access to broadband has the potential to touch virtually every aspect of our community its positive impact will be even more dramatic here, where a little capital goes a long way (and a whole lot of capital goes even further).

Today, high-speed data connectivity is neither a luxury nor an enhancement; on the contrary, it is absolutely essential to the proper functioning of our healthcare system, the move to universal electronic medical records, e-prescribing, and many other crucial endeavors. I urge you to favorably consider Franklin Community Health Network's proposal to establish broadband infrastructure in rural western and central Maine Communities.

Sincerely,

Sam Elowitch

Executive Director, Rural Broadband Initiative

cc: Jeremy Marcus

Thomas Buckley

Erika Olsen



April 9, 2007

Kevin J. Martin, Chairman Federal Communications Commission 445 12th Street, SW Washington, DC 20554

Re: Rural Health Care Pilot Program: WC Docket No 02-60

Dear Mr. Martin,

As a member of Central Maine Healthcare, Bridgton Hospital fully supports, and looks forward to participating in, the *Rural Western and Central Maine Broadband Initiative*. FCC funding of this collaborative effort will bring us the critical redundancy necessary to assure dependable, secure, two-way communications for transferring clinical data. At the present time, access is provided by a single carrier (Verizon) and, when a break in service occurs, our clinicians can neither send nor receive clinical data, particularly to and from Central Maine Medical Center, the region's tertiary care hospital and Level II trauma center. In the past year alone, service breaks have occurred not only as the result of a wire coming down (when an auto hit a pole), but also due to human error (when a Verizon worker at company headquarters accidentally hit the wrong switch). Having access to a second provider, in this case Oxford Networks, is therefore incredibly important to us.

Bridgton Hospital also serves a number of off-site practices, as well as rural communities where providers and patients live. As new health-related digital services become available, broadband access at practice locations and in homes will be increasingly important. We want patients to be active participants in their healthcare. We want them to be able to use the innovative new service and educational opportunities that our organizations are making available to them. In other words, the collaborators all take a broad view of health, understanding that broadband access will yield positive results, not only for our healthcare organizations and individual providers, but also for individual community members, social service agencies, educational organizations, and the local economy. In the isolated world of rural Maine, whatever benefits the overall community contributes to the physical and mental health of its individual members.

We believe the project will enhance our ability to bring more and better healthcare services to the people in and around Bridgton, and improve the health of the region.

The Rural Western and Central Maine Broadband Initiative is an implementation project, not a planning project, and it is designed to be <u>self-sustaining</u>. Though these points are made in the proposal itself, I wanted to stress them again in this letter of support.

Sincerely,

John M. Carlson

President/Chief Executive Officer



April 25, 2007

Kevin J. Martin - Chairman Federal Communications Commission 445 12th Street, SW Washington, DC 20554

Re: Rural Health Care Pilot Program: WC Docket No 02-60

Dear Mr. Martin:

On behalf of our providers and patients, and as a critical access hospital and member organization of Central Maine Healthcare, Rumford Hospital supports the Rural Western and Central Maine Broadband Initiative collaborative pilot application. This project will bring us broadband redundancy that will insure secure, dependable communication of clinical data today and in the future. It will also bring broadband to those parts of our service area that currently lack access.

Franklin Community Health Network (the lead organization), HealthReach Community Health Centers, and Central Maine Healthcare – the collaborative partners - have designed the project in a way that benefits not only healthcare organizations, but also individual providers, consumers, and the communities in which they live and work. As new digitally-based services become available, particularly for consumers, broadband access at practice locations, in the homes of clinicians, and in the homes of consumers will be increasingly important. We know that broadband access is a 'plus' for our healthcare organizations and clinicians. It is also a 'plus' for individual consumers, educational organizations, social service agencies, and the local economy. Good health is a partnership between providers and patients, and it is a community affair. Whatever benefits the overall community also contributes to the physical and mental health of its individual members.

This is not a planning proposal. It is an implementation proposal. Furthermore, it is uniquely sustainable. Once the entire broadband infrastructure is in place, the system will be sustained by regular subscriber fees to Oxford Networks. Access will not depend on future funding or significant contributions by the collaborators in this proposal. This project will enhance our ability to bring more and better healthcare services to the people in and around Rumford, and improve the health of the region.

I understand that the infrastructure outlined in the application will be achieved in partnership with Oxford Networks, a 100-year old Maine-based company that has pledged the application's required 15% cash match.

Sincerely,

John Welsh

Chief Executive Officer



April 24, 2007

Kevin J. Martin - Chairman Federal Communications Commission 445 12th Street, SW Washington, DC 20554

Rural Health Care Pilot Program: WC Docket No 02-60

Dear Mr. Martin:

At Central Maine Medical Center (CMMC), participation in clinical trials and national studies has long been part of the institutional fabric – particularly in Cardiovascular Medicine, Oncology and Quality. Nevertheless, the designation of research as a division, with its own Director and Coordinator is a relatively recent development, arising from the need to better manage and expand research hospital-wide.

With the establishment of the Central Maine Heart and Vascular Institute (CMHVI) and new hires in 2002, the first academic affiliations and peer reviewed research was brought to CMMC, with involvement of graduate and undergraduate students. We know that a robust and expanding research enterprise will attract more clinician researchers, and that research will ultimately improve the quality of care across the region. Therefore, we are actively moving towards this goal, first by assessing the current status of our research program, and then developing the appropriate internal supports and infrastructure that will enable it to grow.

The ability to move large data files among research and educational facilities, as well as to and from individual clinician scientists, is a critical component of this supportive research infrastructure.

The Rural Western and Central Maine Broadband Initiative project not only recognizes and addresses the general needs of the healthcare community as it is today ... its unique inclusive design also addresses the special and fast-approaching needs of tomorrow's healthcare world. As an implementation project, access will be achieved by the end of the first year, with additional access being made available during year two. As our research enterprise grows, we and those we serve will be assured of appropriate broadband access.

Susan Horton

Executive Director



CENTRAL MAINE MEDICAL CENTER SCHOOL OF NURSING

70 Middle Street • Lewiston, ME 04240 (207) 795-2840

April 11, 2007

Richard Batt
President and CEO
Franklin Community Health Network
111 Franklin Health Commons
Farmington, Maine 04938

Dear Mr. Batt.

As you know, the CMMC School of Nursing is the only hospital-based nursing school left in Maine. An independent degree-granting 2-year private college, we are accredited by the Maine State Board of Nursing, the National League for Nursing, and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). Our graduates receive an Applied Science Degree in Nursing.

We currently provide distance learning in three rural communities – there in Farmington, at Franklin Memorial Hospital's Ben Franklin Center, and at sites in Mexico, and Bridgton (at Bridgton Hospital). Educational content is disseminated from our classrooms in Lewiston via compressed video at 256 kbs bandwidth.

The shortage of RNs in Maine continues to grow. There are potential students living in rural towns who would like to pursue a nursing career, but due to family and/or employment constraints and obligations are unable to travel an hour or more one way, four days a week for four semesters to fulfill their goals. To meet these needs we developed, and continue to develop, distance education opportunities, including an exciting new affiliation currently evolving between CMMC and the BSN program at St. Joseph's College.

CMMC also offers education through the Clark F. Miller School of Radiologic Technology and the School of Nuclear Medicine Technology (the only nuclear medicine technology school in Maine and New Hampshire) — both of which are located here in Lewiston. Our long-term plan is to bring these programs under our degree-granting umbrella, and offer distance learning.

While our network currently uses Polycom video units at key rural sites, we see higher education moving towards interactive PC-based 'virtual classroom' instruction. This model will likely be in our future as well. Therefore, access to broadband in the rural homes of tomorrow's health professions students is crucial. FCC approval of our collaborative proposal will allow individual consumers to gain broadband access and will help the entire region move towards this new health professions virtual classroom model.

Very truly yours,

Sharon Kuhrt, RN, MSN Director, School of Nursing

Sharon Kuhi

CENTRAL & WESTERN MAINE REGIONAL PHO

IHC, Inc. (CMMC & LAPA)

Bridgton PHO, Inc.

Rumford PHO, Inc.

Parkview PHO, Inc.

Western Maine PHO, Inc.

300 Main Street

Lewiston, ME 04240

Tel: (207) 795-2953

Fax: (207) 795-2981

E-mail: jkane@cmhc.org

Kevin J. Martin Chairman

Federal Communications Commission

445 12th Street, SW

Washington, DC 20554

April 24, 2007

WC Docket No 02-60: Rural Health Care Pilot Program:

Dear Chairman Martin,

The purpose of this letter is to show support for the Franklin Community Health Network's proposal "Rural Western and Central Maine Broadband Initiative" to the Rural Health Care Pilot Program.

Our organization, the Central & Western Maine Regional PHO (Physician Hospital Organization), is made up of 364 physicians practicing at Central Maine Medical Center, Bridgton Hospital, Rumford Hospital, Parkview Adventist Medical Center and Franklin Memorial Hospital – all of which are part of Franklin Community Health Network's proposed Rural Western and Central Maine Broadband Initiative.

Our physicians and hospitals provide much needed services to over 400,000 patients in very rural areas in the rural state of Maine. Funding of this important initiative will improve quality and reduce costs by:

- Allowing access by patients and physicians to the wide range of digital information and tools discussed in the proposal,
- Allowing the physician offices to electronically transmit, over the web, medication prescription orders to area pharmacies ... improving patient safety and the "pick-up rate" of prescriptions.
- Allowing treating physicians and treating hospitals to have electronic access, over the web, to the
 patients complete, up-to-date medication list ... improving patient safety and ensuring more
 effective treatments.

Without reliable broadband access, this universal accessibility is impossible.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Jim Kane

Executive Director, Central & Western Maine Regional PHO

Program: FCC Letter.doc

April 24, 2007



Bridgton · Lewiston · Oxford · Wilton

Kevin J. Martin Chairman Federal Communications Commission 445 12th Street, SW Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: 'Rural Health Care Pilot Program': WC Docket No. 02-60

Dear Mr. Martin:

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for Franklin Community Health Network's Rural Western and Central Maine Broadband Initiative in collaboration with HealthReach Community Health Centers and Central Maine Healthcare. Broadband availability greatly impacts our staff's ability to use technology that is currently available for the benefit of the patients we serve.

Androscoggin Home Care and Hospice (AHCH) provides home care and end-of-life hospice services to residents of western and central Maine. As the largest home health and hospice agency in Maine, we serve over 8,200 patients and families annually with a staff of 445, including 250 visiting nurses.

In 2006, AHCH implemented a comprehensive Electronic Medical Records (EMR) system in order to improve patient care through on-demand, virtualized access for clinicians. This implementation requires clinicians in the field to access data quickly and transmit data with others involved in the patient care plan. Our nurses are now able to input information into this system while visiting patients' homes through use of hand-held computers; on-call nurses achieve access to this EMR from a laptop computer application from home. This results in greater efficiency by streamlining the process of updating medical records, and improves the accuracy of medical records through faster updating. Instead of obtaining information about patients via paper records located in an office, providers have quick access to patient information. The system also facilitates the admissions process.

A very important component of this initiative is the ability for our on-call nurses to access the EMR from home in order to address emergent patient needs outside normal business hours. For this initiative to operate the most efficiently, our care providers need access to high-speed connections. Our on-call nurses, who live in areas of western and central Maine without broadband internet access, experience difficulties connecting to the system from slow or unreliable dial-up connections. Without remote connections that are fast and reliable, providers cannot easily synchronize patient information with the EMR system. In addition, our software vendor is in the process of testing their product for use with wireless networks which would allow staff to synchronize data via wireless and broadband connections instead of the present method using phone lines. The broadband access provided through this project would result in great benefit to care providers at AHCH and to the patients we serve.

I urge you to consider Franklin Community Health Network's application favorably, and assist them in bringing much needed broadband services to this region.

Julie Shackley President/CEO

Androscoggin Home Care & Hospice

ce:

Jeremy Marcus Thomas Buckley Erika Olsen



P.O. Box 107, Farmington, ME 04938

Tel: 207.778.5887 • Fax: 207.778.3442 • info@greaterfranklin.com

April 18, 2007

Kevin J. Martin, Chairman Federal Communications Commission 445 12th Street, SW Washington, DC 20554

Dear Mr. Martin:

Re: Rural Health Care Pilot Program: WC Docket No. 02-60

I am writing to give my enthusiastic support for Franklin Community Health Network's proposal to establish greater broadband access in rural western and central Maine communities. Increased broadband Internet presence will have a profound economic impact on this region.

Beyond a few small areas, the majority of Franklin County in the western Maine region is not served by high-speed Internet access. For many businesses, this presents a significant obstacle, as high speed connections are needed to stay competitive with businesses in urban centers, and large reports and files become standard in many industries. The presence of broadband Internet access will make this region more attractive to new and developing businesses by providing the tools needed in today's digital age. Expanded access in the few areas already served by a broadband provider, moreover, would provide important redundancy connections in cases of service failure.

Despite our status as a small rural community, the greater Franklin County area is home to several areas of excellence. Our healthcare system, Franklin Community Health Network, and its affiliate hospital, Franklin Memorial, are nationally recognized and acclaimed, and offer area residents sophisticated, high quality care in their own community. The University of Maine at Farmington, named one of "America's Best Colleges" for the past 10 consecutive years by U.S. News & World Report, is known nationally for rigorous academics and outstanding faculty. Broadband access throughout the community is key to sustaining these areas of excellence, and keeping FCHN and UMF on the cutting edge. While UMF already has proprietary Internet for its campus, FMH is one of the few hospitals in the state that lacks access to high-speed broadband. For both institutions, access at home for healthcare professionals, professors, and students is key, but virtually impossible in much of this region.

The greater Franklin County community is valued by many seasonal and year-long residents. A four-season region offering many opportunities for outdoor recreation, as well as a strong, vibrant community, the area is cherished by visitors and residents for the quality of life available. High-speed broadband allows people to move to the community where they want to live, and telecommute to work across the country. Franklin County's location, within two hours of three

Kevin J. Martin, Chairman Federal Communications Commission April 18, 2007 Page 2 of 2

airports (Augusta, Bangor, and Portland) would make this a viable option for many individuals – if broadband was available. I anticipate that greater accessibility of broadband will entice more people to relocate to this wonderful area, revitalizing the local economy.

I urge you to consider FCHN's application favorably. The impact that this initiative would have on our community is nearly immeasurable.

Best regards,

Alison A. Hagerstrom
Executive Director

cc: Jeremy Marcus Thomas Buckley Erika Olsen



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Kevin J. Martin - Chairman Federal Communications Commission 445 12th Street, SW Washington, DC 20554

Rural Health Care Pilot Program: WC Docket No 02-60

Dear Mr. Martin:

As you have seen in the Rural Western and Central Maine Broadband Initiative proposal. Maine's nascent public health system is being built upon the work of 30+ community-based Healthy Maine Partnerships (HMPs). These HMPs were initially funded with tobacco settlement money, with a mission of reducing tobacco use and tobacco-related chronic disease. They continue to focus on changing policies and environments to be more supportive of decreased tobacco use, increased physical activity, healthy eating, and chronic-disease prevention. Three of the HMPs are currently located in the service area covered by Central Maine Healthcare. Healthy Androscoggin, which serves the largest population of the three, is located in Lewiston.

By the end of 2007 the evolving public health system structure will undergo another change, as the HMP functions become more regionalized, the number of HMPs is reduced, and new responsibilities are added to their original mission. One of these new responsibilities is chronic disease self-management. Community coalitions will work to increase the number of people across the lifespan who have access to local, personal health self management supports and who use them to prevent or manage chronic diseases.

Strong and redundant broadband access is key not only to more fully engaging people in their own healthcare, but also to moving Maine's community based public health agenda forward. As one of the state's model HMPs, Franklin Community Health Network's Healthy Community Coalition, has shown that communication with state and federal health agencies, individual consumers, providers, provider organizations, and local community government is crucial in bringing resources to bear on public health issues.

Furthermore, in terms of public health emergency management, such as information dispersal during an epidemic like bird flu, it is critical that all of the above stakeholders - including individual consumers - have constant and reliable access to information.

On behalf of Healthy Androscoggin and the organizations, individuals and communities we serve. I am extending letter of support for the Rural Western and Central Maine Broadband Initiative.

Angela Cole Westhoff

Executive Director

Mailing Address: 300 Main Street, Lewiston, Maine 04240

Office Location: 364 Main Street, 2rd Floor, Lewiston, ME 04240

Tel.: (207) 795-5990

Fax: (207) 795-5992

www.healthyandroscoggin.org

Re: 'Rural Health Care Pilot Program': WC Docket No. 02-60

Kevin J. Martin Chairman Federal Communications Commission 445 12th Street, SW Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Mr. Martin:

I write to give my support for Franklin Community Health Network's Rural Western and Central Maine Broadband Initiative, a project in collaboration with HealthReach Community Health Centers and Central Maine Healthcare.

Although all of North Country Associates' long-term care and skilled nursing facilities are networked to our main offices in Lewiston, thus providing all 17 locations with high speed Internet on site, this initiative by FCHN nevertheless will provide key support to our locations in central and western Maine. Supporting the educational needs of our staff in rural regions is always a challenge. Through distance learning options, online resources, and teleconferenced programs, our staff can meet continuing education and licensing needs without devoting valuable time and resources to travel. Broadband access at education sites such as FCHN's Ben Franklin Center, or providing staff with appropriate Internet access in their homes will do much to expand educational capacities in this region.

In addition to supporting our staff, this initiative will also support our communication with the community, and with the people we serve. Our website provides a quick and easy way for individuals to learn more about our facilities and services. The Internet also provides individuals with a way to communicate with staff, and provide key information for the care of loved ones currently at our facilities. In this digital age, as society comes to rely on Internet as source of information and method of communication, it is vital that we support these opportunities. A robust broadband infrastructure in western and central Maine communities will support these new methods of communication.

I urge you to favorably consider Franklin Community Health Network's proposal to establish broadband infrastructure in rural western and central Maine Communities.

Sincerely.

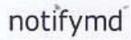
Carol M.Timberlake

Administrator

cc:

Jeremy Marcus Thomas Buckley Erika Olsen

A Health Cate Management and Development Group



Connecting patients and physicians. One call at a time.

Re: 'Rural Health Care Pilot Program': WC Docket No. 02-60

Kevin J. Martin Chairman Federal Communications Commission 445 12th Street, SW Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Mr. Martin:

I am writing to express my support for Franklin Community Health Network's Rural Western and Central Maine Broadband Initiative in collaboration with HealthReach Community Health Centers and Central Maine Healthcare.

In December 2006, NotifyMD, the nation's leading provider of comprehensive messaging services to the physician practices industry, selected Farmington for its new national Care Coordination Center after conducting a nationwide search. This call center, which became operational on March 1 of this year, will ultimately add 120 new jobs to this region.

Although our new Farmington call center has access to high-speed Internet on-site, greater access to broadband services, as proposed in this initiative, will provide immeasurable benefit to this community and to our organization. Broadband access in more homes will allow our employees to work from home in times of crisis, and will allow us to expand our employee base beyond the physical capacity of our facility. A more robust Internet infrastructure will also facilitate communication with our Farmington employees. Importantly, broadband access at the healthcare sites identified in this proposal will provide us with the opportunity to provide innovations in electronic messaging services to area providers as they develop. We know that technology has a powerful potential to improve communication between providers and patients, and improve the quality of care. This proposal will make those same innovations available in rural areas.

It is also worth noting that this initiative won't just support healthcare in rural western and central Maine; this will also provide a model for rural communities across the nation by demonstrating the impact that investment in rural broadband infrastructure has on a community.

We urge you to favorably consider Franklin Community Health Network's proposal to establish broadband infrastructure in rural western and central Maine Communities.

Sincerely-

Jonathan McDevitt Chief Technology Officer Executive Vice President

cc:

Jeremy Marcus Thomas Buckley Erika Olsen



The Opportunity Center of North Franklin County, Inc.

April 30, 2007

Kevin J. Martin, Chairman Federal Communications Commission 445 12th Street, SW Washington, D.C. 20554

RE: Rural Health Care Pilot Program: WC Docket No. 02-60

Dear Mr. Martin:

As chairperson of the Opportunity Center (OC) of North Franklin County, I am writing to express our support for Franklin Community Health Network's (FCHN) and Central Maine Broadband Initiative in collaboration with HealthReach Community Health Centers and Central Maine Healthcare.

The OC is a not for profit organization involved in community building utilizing strategies of economic development and educational access in the northern portion of Franklin County. Topographically this comprises about 80% of the land mass. Demographically it contains about 20% of the population base. It is the northernmost extension of the FCHN service area and its physician coverage is solely through the auspices of HealthReach Community Health Centers.

The OC has had modest success with our strategies for community development. In that process, we have identified that the lack of communication infrastructure, which we have translated into broadband access, is the single greatest barrier to the development of healthy communities.

Clearly we have some selfish reasons for supporting this grant request. The combination of communication support for our physicians and inter-connectivity with our single local acute as well public health oriented institution (FCHN) provides endless opportunity to be part of the rapid technological and informational changes which are now demanded by 21st century healthcare standards. The geographic presence of an associated, accessible technical broadband infrastructure speaks for itself in relation to the OC goals.

Although a sense of uniqueness is a source of pride in most rural areas, the general deterioration of our communities and poor access to healthcare informational resources are common to most of rural America.

PO Box 454 • Phillips, Maine 04966 Delivery • 62 Wheeler Hill Road info@ocnfc.org • www.ocnfc.org We interpret the design of this grant proposal as bringing together diverse, unaligned health care organizations and private enterprise to impact the two most common problems in rural America - healthy people and healthy communities. If funded, this program will be successful. Whether successful or not, it provides a unique collaborative effort of resources common to all rural areas - Federal initiatives, local and regional health care organizations and local entrepreneurs. In our opinion, there is no way this cannot be helpful in understanding the usefulness in investing in rural broadband communication infrastructure.

We urge you to favorably consider Franklin Community Health Network's proposal to establish broadband infrastructure in rural western and central Maine communities.

Sincerely yours,

William C. Crandall

Chair, OC Board of Directors

Cc: M. Tanner, Secy.

S. Lambert, Treas.